

ERÖFFNUNG DES 65. GENERAL MEETING OF THE STUDIORUM NOVI TESTAMENTI SOCIETAS (SNTS)

Recently I was wondering when I first heard of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas. Inevitably, I remembered the years I spent in Tübingen, where I studied and worked with Gerd Jeremias and Martin Hengel – at that time still a Patristic Scholar and a Historian of Ancient Christianity-to-be. Of those years, I most vividly recollect discussing Martin Hengel's memorable 1993 Chicago Presidential Address which was – at the suggestion of Dieter Betz – entitled »Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft« (i.e. agenda for New Testament scholarship) and which was published shortly afterwards, in 1994, in *New Testament Studies*. Hengel opened his speech by comparing the sources on New Testament with those on church history – i.e. the roughly 680 pages strong Nestle-Aland with the 378 volumes of the Migne, the 100 volumes of the Weimar edition of Martin Luther's works and the *Corpus Reformationum*. To this he added »dazu zahllose andere Quellen« (321) [»furthermore countless other sources«], for instance, the Greek and Latin inscriptions, the corpora of the church fathers and of physicians edited by the Academy of Sciences here in Berlin.

Hengel then continued his speech remarking that well into the 1960ies – at least in Germany – most New Testament scholars simultaneously were Patristic scholars. And to illustrate his point he mentioned the names of the scholars in question: Dobschütz, Hilgenfeld, Overbeck, Zahn – and not to forget the Berliners amongst them: Aland, Deissmann, Harnack und Lietzmann (325f.).

He presented very similar findings with regard to Anglo-Saxon scholars, who worked on the Apostolic Fathers, presenting a rich and valuable source of information for scholars up to this day. Within the context of my (academic) discipline – I would just like to point out one member of the »Cambridge triumvirate«, i.e. Fenton J.A. Hort and his work on the *Stromateis* by Clement of Alexandria or his »Six Lectures on the Ante-Nicene Fathers«, delivered in 1895.

Of course I am aware – as was Hengel in 1993 – that times have changed: Hort was, as a relevant publication puts it, also an »accomplished botanist«, and by 1922 Lietzmann had written and released his »Anleitung zur Himmelsbeobachtung mit kleinen Fernrohren« (Instructions on how to study the sky with small telescopes). Hengel used to speak of the »perniziöse Spezialisierung« (pernicious specialisation) of all academic disciplines which in present-day aca-

demia hardly encourages such trans-disciplinary digressions any longer. In his 1993 Chicago Presidential Address the Tübingen scholar suggested that – especially in Germany and especially at the end of the 20th century – the range of topics of New Testament scholarship in the course of this »pernicious specialisation« had constantly been narrowed down to merely the New Testament. He thus called upon New Testament scholars: »Not limitation but extension has to be our aim«, and argued in favour of an extension of the thematic range of Patristics into the third century A.D.: »Die Konkurrenz zwischen den Disziplinen kann hier nur heilsam sein. Sie ,belebt das Geschäft‘«.

Now, I do not want to reel off all of the numerous New Testament scholars that have followed Hengel's call in the years since 1993 – after all, the Mohr-Siebeck publishing house, greatly valued by all of us, will shortly present a new journal initiated by a former student of Hengel's, who closely follows the suggested direction of Presidential Address.

It is of great importance to me though, dear colleagues, to welcome you not only in the name of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin as its president, but to add a small footnote to the remarks of my greatly valued teacher Hengel: Certainly, competition stimulates business, and the so called Apostolic Fathers Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Hippolytus und Origenes have left immensely complex works that deserve all the students they can get. But competition can also obstruct or even destroy business. And wouldn't it be a foolish idea to »cut off« the long third century rather abruptly after Origenes and Cyprian – when really it only comes to an end with the first two decades of the fourth century?

In order not to get in severe trouble studying the second century (and the same holds true for parts of the third), New Testament scholarship needs to co-operate with Classics and Patristic Studies, which just happen to be the disciplines specialising in the history, literature and archaeology of ancient Christianity. Christian, Jewish and pagan antiquity can only be studied with combined efforts and with combined strength – i.e. inter-disciplinarily in the best sense of the word. Territorial claims of disciplines, afraid of losing their subject-matter (and purpose) are not particularly helpful – even if one fully understands such reactions.

Far be it from me to bother you with indirect advertising for Berlin, but you will – later, after the welcome reception, when below the Pergamon-Altar you walk into Theodor-Wiegand-hall with a drink in your hand – come across the screening of a film on the Berlin Excellence cluster »Topoi. The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilisations«. In my humble opinion, this Excellence cluster combines the strength and the efforts of New Testament scholars, Patristic scholars, and Classics scholars of distinct and various provenances masterly, just like they are combined masterly in many places from which you have travelled to Berlin. In the preface to his series of lectures on the »Ante Nicene Fathers« Fenton Hort demonstrates, why it certainly is worthwhile for New Testament scholars to occupy themselves with the church fathers or Origines.

And while Hengel in 1993 in good old German tradition offered elaborate reasons and spoke of the »ersten Auslegern unser Schriftensammlung«, the »Hauptzeugen für die Konsolidierung des Kanons im kirchlichen Gebrauch« (329f.), Hort, with a little British understatement, writes that in early texts such as these one finds »a peculiar freshness«, and adds »If we read their words with an open and teachable mind, we shall often find there abundant help and instruction« (2). Maybe the truth, ladies and gentlemen, lies somewhere between Hengel and Hort – and probably, to some degree, both are right.

I hope that during your stay here in Berlin and during this conference you will encounter plenty of traces of the fruitful inter-disciplinary atmosphere in which antiquity is studied in this city, I hope that you will – where we are not yet as interdisciplinary as we might and should be – help and inspire us with examples of good practise from your home countries and cities, and most of all, I do hope that you will feel welcome and well taken care of at this university and in this city of Berlin. I wish you – as president of this university as well as Patristic scholar – a wonderful, exciting and stimulating conference!